

Monocacy Scenic River

Water Trail Map & Guide



"The Monocacy's size makes it one of the more reliably floatable streams... in this state of small creeks...a good retreat for a quiet day in the outdoors...."

—Edward Gertler



The Monocacy River begins near the Pennsylvania border and flows 58 miles through central Maryland before emptying in the Potomac River and, eventually, the Chesapeake Bay.

A 41.4-mile water trail on this Maryland Scenic River takes paddlers through an historic Civil War landscape and areas once inhabited by American Indians and early European settlers who were attracted to this fertile, relatively flat valley between the Catocin Mountains on the west and Parr's Ridge on the east.

Sycamores, maples, and oaks line the riverbanks and seasonally shade the waterway along much of its route. In some areas, high bluffs rise abruptly on one side of the Monocacy while marsh grasses or shrubs cloak a low bank on the opposite side. Here and there the bluffs and trees give way, opening up a variety of vistas ranging from extensive farmlands and distant wooded ridges to sub-divisions and city buildings.

Native Americans camped, hunted, and fished here 10,000 years ago after the glaciers receded. About 2,000 years ago, the Seneca, Shawnee, and other

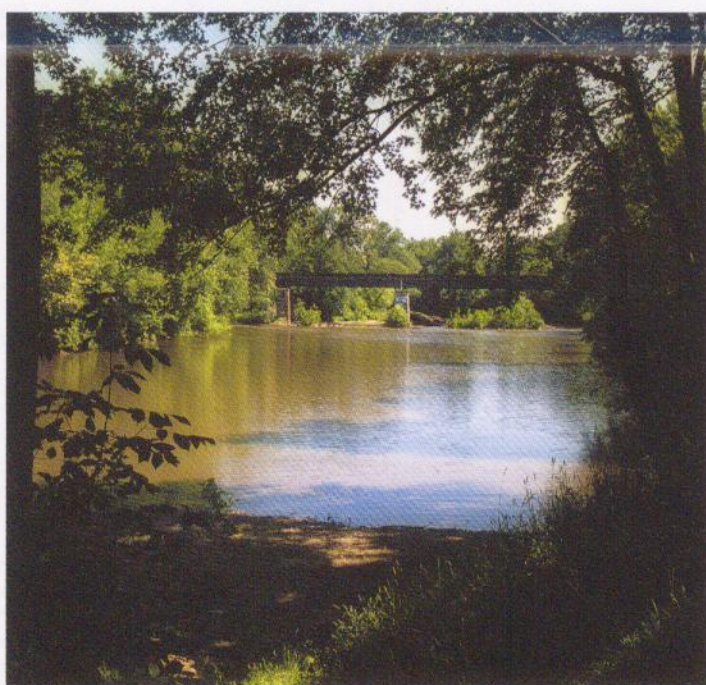
Indians lived here in intermittent or permanent villages. Besides fishing and hunting, they tilled the soil and raised corn. The Shawnee called the river the Monnockkesy, the "river with many bends," while

other Indians referred to the river as "the garden creek" because of the lush vegetation bordering its banks.

"The place is without question, the most healthful and pleasant place," Henry Fleet wrote when he explored the upper Monocacy Valley in the 1600s. "And for deer, buffaloes, bears, turkey the woods do swarm with them and the soil is exceedingly fertile...."

Franz Louis Michel, a Swiss explorer, visited

and mapped the valley in 1702 and 1707 as he looked for sources of silver and gold. German and English families in Pennsylvania began moving down the river in the 1700s and settling in the valley. They cleared woodlands, established sawmills and farms, formed villages, and set up gristmills powered by the river and its larger streams. By the century's end the valley had more than 870 gristmills along the Monocacy and its tributaries. Paddlers can still see one of them, Michael's Mill, which stands above the riverway east of Buckeystown.



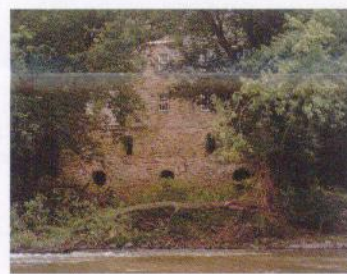
LeGore Bridge



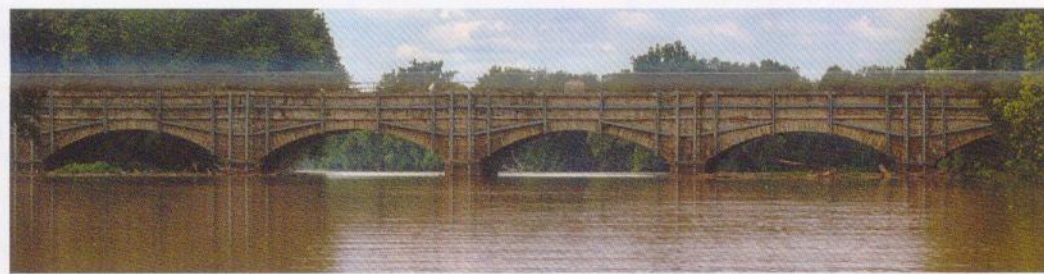
Great Blue Heron



Fishing for Bass on the Monocacy



Michael's Mill



Monocacy Aqueduct

The Monocacy River affects the Chesapeake Bay

The Monocacy River flows 58 miles on its journey to the Potomac River and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. With headwaters near the Mason-Dixon Line, the river winds along the Carroll and Frederick County border in central Maryland, draining more than 970 square miles of agricultural and developed lands. Land use practices and drinking water demands throughout the river's watershed affect the quality and quantity of water flowing down stream.

In 1974, Maryland designated the Monocacy a state scenic river in the Scenic and Wild Rivers Program. A management plan was developed to guide future restoration

and protection efforts. A heightened awareness of the river led to the initiation of conservation projects. Today, native trees and shrubs are planted along the Monocacy and its tributaries to create wildlife habitat and reduce soil erosion. Local students lead the way in an on-going stream monitoring program coordinated by Hood College. Canoe and kayak tours and other hands-on educational programs are held to celebrate the river as a recreational and environmental resource. Paddlers can observe a diversity of wildlife along the river from turtles, bank swallows, green herons, Baltimore orioles, bald eagles, and indigo buntings attributed to local conservation efforts.

Partners in sustainability — Gateways and Community Commons

The Monocacy Water Trail is part of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network—a system of water trails, parks, refuges, historic sites and museums for experiencing the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. Gateways are places to enjoy Chesapeake life and culture first-hand.

To explore other gateways within the Chesapeake watershed or to receive a free Gateways Network Map & Guide, go to: www.baygateways.net

This publication is supported in part through assistance from the National Park Service.



Since the early 1970s, Community Commons has supported community-based conservation projects in the Monocacy River region. Established as a nonprofit organization in late 1977, we are dedicated to building a sustainable future for the region's social and natural resources through education, outreach and partnership building. For more information call (301) 662-3000 or browse our web site at: www.communitycommons.org



Monocacy Water Trail



A Trip to the Potomac

The Monocacy Water Trail is a self-guided tour of the lower 41.4 miles of the river from the MD 77 bridge east of Thurmont to the Potomac River near Dickerson.

The Monocacy is usually runnable in the spring and early summer up to mid-July and from late fall through winter unless extreme drought conditions exist. The average floating speed is two miles per hour.

To start a canoe trip from the MD 77 Bridge, the U.S. Geological Survey gauge at Jug Bridge in Frederick should read 350 cubic feet per second (cfs) or show a water level of at least 2.1 feet. From Devilbiss Bridge and below, the gauge should read at least 215 cfs or 1.7 feet. The Monocacy River does reach hazardous flood stages after rain events. The National Weather Service reports flooding and related hazards for both the Monocacy and Potomac on local media outlets.

There is some risk involved in water paddling. You alone are responsible for your safety. Weather and water conditions can change quickly, and it is up to each paddler to learn the proper skills and make prudent judgements. While care has been taken to provide accurate information, we take no responsibility for any errors or omissions.

Use the boat ramps and other access points listed below to put in or take out your canoe, kayak, or johnboat. Right and left directions refer to points of interest as you travel south on the riverway. To help plan your trip highway bridges are noted.

In times of low water, a portage is necessary around Biggs Ford Dam. Inexperienced canoeists may also want to make portages at Buckeystown Dam and Greenfield Rapids.

Protect Yourself

- Check weather conditions before starting your river trip.
- Never travel alone.
- Tell someone your intended route and return time.
- Wear a life jacket while boating, tubing, or fishing.
- If you capsize, stay upstream of your vessel.

Protect the Riverway

- Do not litter; carry out what you carry in.
- Most lands along the river are privately owned; do not trespass.
- Toilet facilities are located at all boat ramps and the Buckeystown Park River Access. Other access points are primitive sites and do not have facilities.

Accesses and Points of Interest

- Mile 0**
1. MD 77 River Access
- Mile 3.2—LeGore Bridge**
2. LeGore Bridge was built around 1900 by local businessman James William LeGore and is on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Mile 6.3—Creagerstown Park**
3. Creagerstown Park Boat Ramp/Access
- Mile 11.7—Devilbiss Bridge**
4. Devilbiss Bridge Road Boat Ramp/Access
5. Biggs Ford – This historic river crossing can be run easily if water levels are normal to high. In low water, portage to the left, crossing over the concrete landing.
6. Frederick City Park and river access at Monocacy Boulevard—an eventual link with downtown Frederick and Carroll Creek's Linear Park.
7. Frederick City Water Treatment—the City has a permit with Maryland Department of the Environment to use up to 3 million gallons of water a day for drinking water and related uses
8. Fort Detrick Water Treatment
9. Fort Detrick Wastewater Treatment
10. Frederick City Wastewater Treatment—between 6 and 20 million gallons of water a day are discharged here, depending on local weather events
11. Pinediff Park and Boat Ramp/Access
- Mile 25.7—Reich's Ford Road Bridge**
12. LaFarge Sediment Ponds—Water output
13. MD 355/Monocacy National Battlefield River Access – Union troops lost the daylong battle at the Monocacy, but delayed Confederate forces long enough to stymie an attack on Washington. The battlefield property continues along primarily the east side of the river for the next two miles.
- Mile 27.5—Urbana Pike (MD 355) Bridge**
14. Ballenger Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant—Operated by Frederick County, the plant meets state water quality standards, often removing 99% of conventional pollutants and more than 70% of nitrogen and phosphorus.
15. Buckeystown Dam and Michael's Mill—Be alert not to capsize at the historic rubble dam crossing the river. Inexperienced canoeists should pull over to the right and scout the rapids. The safest route is through the "V" in the rapids, river right. The portage, by land, is about a quarter-mile's walk. Notice the 1739 gristmill, Michael's Mill, high on the bluff to your right. The building, which now houses a business, was operational until the 1950s.
16. Buckeystown Park River Access—Walk up a small clearing in the trees to a picnic shelter. Several houses built in the 1700s and 1800s are located in the Buckeystown Historic District, a mile west of the park. One stone house was the home of Charles Carroll, a signer of the Declaration of Independence.
- Mile 31.8—Fingerboard Road**
17. Greenfield Rapids and Bridge Ruins—Head for the "V" in this Class I rapid, the only natural rapids on the river. Be especially careful in the summer when water levels are low. Note the abutments to the old Greenfield Mills Bridge, which was destroyed by floodwaters that swept down the river during Hurricane Agnes in 1972.
- Mile 37.6—Park Mills Road Bridge**
18. Park Mills Bridge Boat Ramp/Access
19. Monocacy Natural Resource Management Area—Forests have been protected along this 2,000 acre tract of state-owned land to provide a buffer along the riverway to help control erosion and provide habitat for wildlife.
- Mile 41.4—Monocacy Aqueduct**
20. Monocacy Aqueduct Boat Ramp/Access—The Monocacy River ends its journey here; the river meets the Potomac just beyond the Aqueduct and C&O Canal.
21. C&O Canal National Historic Park—Established as a national park in 1971, the canal extends 184 miles, from Georgetown to Cumberland.

- Interstate highway
- Important highway
- County boundary
- Point of interest
- Boat ramp-paddle access only
- Bridge
- City boundary
- National Park Service property
- Covered bridge



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